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Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin February 2025 Volume 17, Number 2

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Editor: Jim Harries, PhD, AVM Governing Board.



The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission encourages some missionaries from the West to engage in their ministries using local languages and resources.

Please suggest contributions to this Bulletin to jim@vulnerablemission.org

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AVM: New organisational structure and leadership

The AVM has been registered as a public benefit association in Germany under the name 'Allianz für Verletzliche Mission'. Internationally, we will continue to operate under 'Alliance for Vulnerable Mission'. This development goes hand in hand with a restructuring of the organisation's leadership. AVM founder Dr. Jim Harries steps back from executive responsibilities, while still serving on the governing board. The AVM will now be led by an executive board consisting of three people with Dr. Marcus Grohmann as Director, Deborah Bernhard as Deputy Director and Maria Richter as secretary.

Read more on the AVM's transition and the people leading the organisation now here: <https://vulnerablemission.org/transition-update/>



Handover Event: Tell us if you want an invite

These changes will be marked by two festive gatherings (in English and German) on 6th February. The celebrations, to last 1 hour, involve past and present members and participants in the AVM, including short speeches, a Biblical devotion, an interview of new office-holders, and so on. One event will be in English, and the other in German. Readers of the Bulletin who would like to be invited (the event is invitation only) to this event, please email this address: celebration@vulnerablemission.org



New Website now online!

Hand in hand with all the changes goes a revamped website in currently two languages: www.vulnerablemission.org for English and www.verletzliche-mission.org for German. Check out for explanations of Vulnerable Mission in text and video format, for helpful resources like webinar recordings, news, upcoming events, etc.



First-ever meeting of AVM Advisory Board

The AVM has had the privilege of some experienced people from church, academic, non-profit sector and other backgrounds to lend their names to give credibility to the network. With the recent organisational changes, we were blessed by the current ‘Advisory Board’ agreeing to take a more active role. Recently, their first ever annual meeting took place that offered an opportunity to rally together in order to support the new AVM executive. With people asking pertinent questions, sharing from the wealth of their own experiences and praying together, Deborah and Marcus were left with much gratitude for this new, additional form of support for the Mission of AVM – to help cross-cultural workers (particularly from the West) to relate to people through their languages and local resources.

See here for those collaborating on the various boards:
<https://vulnerablemission.org/about/our-team/>



Write-up of webinar: ‘Learning Over Power: moving beyond cross-cultural competency to cultural humility’.

Debbie Kramlich, currently living in Thailand, and with cross cultural experience in addition of living in Germany and Sweden, gave us a gentle deep dive into ‘cultural humility’. We all wear tinted glasses, Debbie reminded us. Thus, we often do not realise the hue through which we interpret the world, wrongly assuming that everyone else sees as we do. Her examples include introduction of steel axes to Australians (more information [here](#)), and alcohol consuming Germans, that seems wrong to Americans. We need ‘deep listening’ to check the biases we bring into a culture, Debbie emphasised to us. (The webinar was planned and presented by the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission together with the ‘rethinking forum’.)

The recording can be watched here: <https://youtu.be/sDCQWSC6Kzs>



Spirits as Euphemism for 'Envies', Implications for Bible Translation, Learning from Africa

Jim Harries will present this paper at the upcoming Bible Translation Forum that will take place on May 2–3, 2025, at the International Conference Center Karimu (Siegenweg 34, 57299 Burbach).

<https://forschungsstiftung.net/bibeluebersetzung/ankuendigung-20-forum-bibeluebersetzung-20th-forum-bible-translation/>

Abstract: This presentation, researched through 36 years of almost daily interactions with African (especially Luo, Kenyan) people, argues that in African contexts, 'spirits' are euphemisms for 'envies'. It explores how this insight applies to Bible translation, suggesting 'spirit', when not referring to God, could be translated as 'envy.' The article identifies a parallel between this and references to "*pneuma*" in Christian Scriptures. It also discusses how spirits, though often seen as evil, can be beneficial, similar to how envy, while negative, is essential to social harmony. The piece investigates 'spirits' as outcomes of the evil eye and examines the relationship between spirits and the Holy Spirit, noting fundamental differences in identity and nature between traditional gods and the Godhead, highlighting the profound revelation in Christian Scriptures leading to vastly different life outcomes from those of polytheistic beliefs.



Sunday Sermon from Paraguay: Tower of Babel vs Pentecost - The Power of Language in Ministry

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_cEx6jKHh0

Heinrich Arnold, member of the *Bruderkhof*, discusses the relationship between the Tower of Babel and Pentecost, in this 8-minute video. Filmed on location in Paraguay as a selfie, he suggests that we ought to reach people in their own languages. This is a preach / Bible study with a difference! It's put together while lunch is being cooked, with contributions from a group of men sitting on a patio relaxing.



Does the West Want to Learn from Majority World (African) Christians? A Puzzle.

<https://www.academia.edu/s/cfa94fdead?source=link>

This discussion is still live. Go to this link, to see what others have commented, and to add your own comments: As any one theological statement in the West is correctly understood only through a wide background theological knowledge, the

same applies to Africans’ words. Taking Africans’ words as if they are a contribution to a Western debate, that needs ‘correction’ through wider reading in that debate, is to misunderstand the African. . . . That this is hardly being engaged, has me question, does the West really want to learn from Majority World (African) Christians and theologians, or are pretences at interest largely a show? If they want to learn, there is a ‘library’ to read, not of books, but of long-term vulnerable exposure to African contexts. Is even one Westerner engaging this?



Future Webinars (2025)

For more information on these webinars, and to register in advance, go to:

<http://vulnerablemission.eventbrite.co.uk>

24th April 2025: Dr. Chris Sadowitz

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Serving in an affluent Japanese context


Vulnerable Mission beyond indigenous languages and local resources?






ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission in cooperation with



Rethinking Forum





24th July 2025: Claire Chong

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Is Religion a Western idea?

Some Emerging Ideas on the Khmer Notion of Sasna ('Religion')






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23rd October 2025: Mark Smith

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Doing Research in 21st century Africa as a European

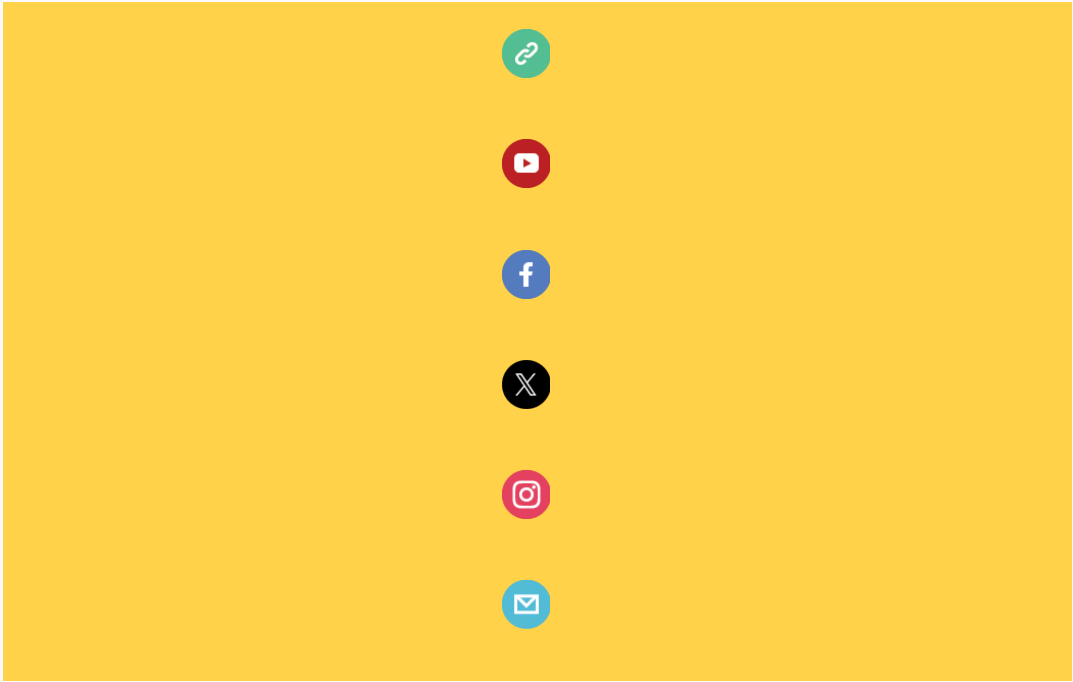
A decolonial approach



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Relating to people through their languages and local resources



The AVM Bulletin is published by Allianz für Verletzliche Mission e. V. / Alliance for Vulnerable Mission (AVM), Heynathstr. 7, 01309 Dresden, registered under Association Register Number 14892 by the local court in Dresden. The AVM is represented by Marcus Grohmann (Director). Contact via phone (+27 81 586 1484) or email (info@vulnerablemission.org).